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President: Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire)

CONTENTS

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES: (continued)

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREED CONCLUSIONS ON THE THEME OF THE 1995 COORDINATION SEGMENT OF THE COUNCIL (continued)

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (continued)

(d) HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)

(e) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

(g) CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Mr. BOUTROS-GHALI (Secretary-General of the United Nations) said that waning ideological confrontations, increasing globalization of the world economy and deepening interdependence among nations had created a historic opportunity for political mobilization in support of international cooperation for development based on genuine partnership and mutuality of interests.

Though welcome, those trends nevertheless had certain consequences which must be addressed by public policy. First, as a result of globalization, the solution to an increasing number of problems required international cooperation and the active involvement of non-State actors. Second, the overall record of development reflected a wide variety of experiences. While a number of developing countries had experienced rapid economic growth in recent years and had become dynamic partners in the international economy, many others continued to be marginalized and effectively excluded from the globalization process. Hunger, ill-health, limited access to education and other public services, exclusion and violence were some of the many burdens borne by the peoples of the developing countries.

The existence of such widespread poverty inhibited the full and effective enjoyment of human rights and weakened democracy and popular participation. It was therefore imperative that Governments acting in partnership with other development actors, including the United Nations system, should fully implement the internationally agreed targets for achieving the overall goal of poverty eradication. He himself would make every effort to enhance the coordination of United Nations actions relating to poverty eradication and to ensure that a rising proportion of the Organization's assistance went to support developing and other countries in that crucial endeavour.

Of particular concern was the critical socio-economic situation in Africa, which was the only region in the world where poverty was expected to increase substantially. The continent's lack of infrastructure, institutions and human resources was further compounded by conflict and disaster situations. The

success of the economic and political reforms undertaken by many African countries had been hampered by limited domestic and external resources for development as well as by other factors which inhibited the integration of those countries in the world economy. The critical situation of Africa required the priority attention of the entire international community. In that connection, the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, launched earlier in the year, was already making significant progress and he would spare no effort to mobilize the resources whenever and wherever required for that purpose.

The global conferences organized under the auspices of the United Nations in the 1990s bore witness to the Organization's deep involvement in the full spectrum of development issues. The conferences had provided a unique forum for world leaders, decision makers and other interested parties to address key issues affecting the future of the planet. Taken together, the results of those conferences offered a strong, new conceptual basis for economic and social cooperation and development, areas in which the United Nations could make a vital contribution. The new inter-agency mechanisms recently established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) would help to coordinate the Organization's organizational activities around those policies, objectives and priorities which had the backing of Member States.

Implementation of the outcomes of the conferences required, however, political will at all levels. All too often the gap between what had been agreed and what was implemented left much to be desired. Effective interaction between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization was also needed at all levels. The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should build on their respective strengths, based on a clear division of labour, in order to respond effectively to the growing interaction between trade, finance and development. In that regard, the Bretton Woods institutions had adopted new approaches to assist the United Nations in its post-conflict peace-building activities and were fully involved in the coordinated follow-up to the global conferences and the Special Initiative on Africa.

Development, however, must be centred on human beings and, in that connection, the global conferences had played a key role in promoting acceptance of the concept of people-centred development and in identifying the actions that were needed to fulfil common goals.

The United Nations was the only international organization with responsibilities related to both peace and development. As such, it was called upon to play a leading role in formulating policies that would ensure peace-building and a continuity between peacekeeping, emergency assistance and development. At the same time, the Organization must also foster greater coherence in global economic policy making and ensure the effective implementation of internationally agreed policies and goals, in cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

One of the Organization's greatest strengths was its operational capacity for development at the field level, but it could not fulfil its role of promoting development cooperation without adequate resources to respond to the changing needs of developing countries and to implement the recommendations of the global conferences. He was personally convinced that the United Nations would remain effective and relevant only as a result of high-quality performance, avoidance of overlap and duplication, responsiveness to changing conditions and trends, transparency in its operations and full accountability for its actions. However, enhancing its performance depended not only on organizational reform but also on adequate and predictable financial resources.

In the context of changing development needs and demands, enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations required further improvement in the coordination and focus of its development activities. It was essential that that effort should be guided by a clear set of priorities and strategies identified by the General Assembly, with the support of the Economic and Social Council, which incorporated the outcomes of the recent global conferences. Steps must also be taken to enhance the ability of the General Assembly to generate substantive solutions to specific policy problems and to adopt an integrated approach to development. A more focused general debate and a more thorough examination of a reduced number of themes by the Main Committees would facilitate such an integrated consideration of development issues.

The ongoing efforts to reform the Economic and Social Council had already produced significant improvements in its functioning, although further efforts were required to increase the Council's capacity to monitor and coordinate the work of the United Nations system. He attached special importance to the Council's role in promoting a coordinated and integrated follow-up to the global conferences. The process of reform required mutually supporting actions by the

Secretary-General and Member States and a better balance in the functioning, responsibilities and authority of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as required by the Charter. Priority requirements for the revitalization of the Council were ministerial participation, the involvement of the new players on the global scene in the high-level segment and further action to enable the Council to exercise an effective role of governance over all the operational funds and programmes of the Organization. A significant strengthening of the Council's role in both policy and operational areas was not only essential in order to provide the necessary basis for a further streamlining and consolidation of secretariat structures but was also a crucial requirement for the ultimate success of the reform effort.

As it approached the twenty-first century, the international community had a collective responsibility to ensure that the United Nations system was equipped to meet the challenges of the new millennium. He wished to pledge his continued commitment to making the world more prosperous, more equitable and more sustainable.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES: (continued) (E/1996/L.39)

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREED CONCLUSIONS ON THE THEME OF THE 1995 COORDINATION SEGMENT OF THE COUNCIL (continued)

Mr. BERROCAL SOTO (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution E/1996/L.39 entitled "Implementation of and follow-up to the major international United Nations conferences and summits" and expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution E/1996/L.39 was adopted.

SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (continued) (E/1996/30 and Corr.1; E/1996/L.18 and Add.1 and E/1996/L.36-L.38)

(d) HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)

Draft resolution E/1996/L.38

Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, introduced draft resolution E/1996/L.38 entitled "Follow-up to the

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" which, she hoped, could be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution E/1996/L.38 was adopted.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to continue its consideration of the draft decisions contained in chapter I, section B of the report of the Commission on Human Rights (E/1996/L.18 and Add.1).

Draft decisions 26 to 28

Draft decisions 26 to 28 were adopted.

Draft decision 29

Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that his delegation was still concerned about the human rights situation in Zaire, notably the continued impunity enjoyed by the army and security forces. The European Union fully supported the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, and urged the Zairian authorities to cooperate fully with him and to implement the recommendations made in his various reports.

It was also concerned that, despite the renewed offer of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the proposed agreement on the establishment of a human rights office in Zaire had not yet been signed by the Zairian authorities, nearly three months after the conclusion of the fifty-second session of the Commission.

Draft decision 29 was adopted.

Draft decision 30

Draft decision 30 was adopted.

Draft decision 31

Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed concern about the human rights situation in Nigeria. While acknowledging that a number of potentially positive developments had taken place, including the interim response of the Nigerian Government to the Secretary-General's fact-finding mission, the European Union continued to have serious doubts about the general human rights situation and the pace and manner of the transition to democratic rule.

The Nigerian Government should guarantee the enjoyment of full human rights and the rule of law. It should also review the cases of political prisoners and individuals who were being held without charge.

The European Union also urged the Nigerian Government to cooperate fully with all the relevant mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights; in particular, it should cooperate fully with the two thematic Special Rapporteurs so that they would be able to submit their interim report to the General Assembly in good time.

Draft decision 31 was adopted.

Draft decision 32

Mr. MRA (Observer for Myanmar) said that his Government had already stated its position with regard to resolution 1996/80 of the Commission on Human Rights. It rejected the intrusive visits by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. His Government also rejected the statements made at the previous meeting by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the European Union and the representative of the United States of America, both of which had violated Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed deep concern at the further serious deterioration of the human rights situation in Myanmar following the adoption of the resolution in question. It was particularly concerned about further restrictions on freedom of speech, movement and association, as well as the continuation of arbitrary arrest and torture, forced labour and military porterage, and the displacement of entire communities.

The European Union urged the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to release members of the National League for Democracy who were still in detention, along with all other political prisoners. In addition, SLORC should enter into dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other representatives of pro-democracy groups and national minorities in order to ensure a rapid return to democratic rule.

The European Union expected a full and satisfactory explanation from the authorities of the circumstances leading up to the death in custody on 22 June 1996 of Mr. James Leader Nichols, who had served as Honorary Consul for several European States. It urged the Special Rapporteur to investigate the matter fully. In addition, the Union called for a visit to Myanmar by the United Nations Special Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and Imprisonment.

Mr. AASS (Observer for Norway) fully endorsed the statement, adding that his Government shared the European Union's deep concern about the deterioration in the human rights situation in Myanmar and the refusal of SLORC to enter into dialogue with pro-democracy groups and urged the authorities in Myanmar to immediately release all political prisoners and take measures to end human rights violations.

His Government had yet to receive a satisfactory explanation of the circumstances leading to the death in custody of Mr. Nichols, who had served as Honorary Consul for Norway. His delegation had requested the Commission on Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar to look into the matter.

Finally, his Government wondered whether the time had not come to consider imposing an arms embargo and economic sanctions on Myanmar within the framework of the United Nations.

Draft decision 32 was adopted.

Draft decision 33

Draft decision 33 was adopted.

Draft decision 34

Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) requested a recorded vote.

Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union in explanation of the vote before the voting, welcomed the preliminary visit made by the Special Representative on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran to that country, and noted with satisfaction the visits made by the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression.

However, despite the cooperation of the Iranian Government with the United Nations human rights mechanisms, there had been little tangible evidence of an improvement in the situation of human rights in that country. The Iranian Government should put an end to the numerous violations of human rights which continued to occur, for example religious intolerance towards the Bahà'i and other minority religious groups and the continuing fatwa on the life of Salman Rushdie. In addition, the European Union called on the Iranian Government to take effective measures to eliminate discrimination against women.

Mr. REZVANI (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in explanation of position, said that the report of the Special Representative to

the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-second session, contained some elements that could provide a basis for further constructive dialogue and cooperation. His Government had extended full cooperation to the Special Representative, both inside and outside Iran, and had also invited the Special Rapporteurs on religious intolerance and on freedom of expression and the High Commissioner for Human Rights himself to visit. His Government was prepared to continue to cooperate with the Special Representative and the Special Rapporteurs and to consider their observations, conclusions and recommendations in a constructive manner, which called for a commensurate response from the Commission on Human Rights, the Council and the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

He called upon the members of the Council, nevertheless, to reject the politicization of human rights by voting against the draft decision.

At the request of the representative of Pakistan, a recorded vote was taken.

In favour: Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela.

Against: Bangladesh, China, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sudan.

Abstaining: Belarus, Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Gabon, Jordan, Lebanon, Philippines, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe.

Draft decision 34 was adopted by 28 votes to 8, with 15 abstentions.

Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his delegation had abstained from the vote because it felt it was necessary in order to maintain the possibility of future cooperation between the Government of Iran and the Commission on Human Rights. His delegation categorically rejected the politicization of such human rights activities.

Draft decision 35

Draft decision 35 was adopted.

Draft decision 36

Ms. QUISUMBING (Centre for Human Rights) said that the following phrase should be inserted at the end of the tenth line of the English text: "and requests the Secretary-General to provide all the assistance necessary to enable the Working Group to carry out its work".

At the request of the representative of the United States of America, a recorded vote was taken.

In favour: Bangladesh, Brazil, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, South Africa, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

Against: Australia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: None.

Draft decision 36 was adopted by 32 votes to 19, with no abstentions.

Mr. RICOCA FREIRE (Portugal) said that his delegation had intended to abstain from the vote.

Draft decision 37

At the request of the representative of the United States of America, a recorded vote was taken.

In favour: Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

Against: Australia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Sweden,

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Bangladesh, Brazil, Malaysia, Portugal, Thailand.

Draft decision 37 was adopted by 25 votes to 20, with 5 abstentions.

Draft decisions 38 to 40

Draft decisions 38 to 40 were adopted.

Mr. VAUGHN-FENN (United Kingdom), supported by Mr. AQUARONE (Netherlands) said that although his delegation had refrained from calling for a recorded vote on draft decision 40 because it understood that many Member States valued any work done to aid indigenous populations, it believed that the study would be of marginal benefit and that, when it became available in three years' time, the resources lavished on it would seem disproportionate. No other Special Rapporteur benefited from "specialized research assistance" or from field missions, and his delegation failed to understand why a Special Rapporteur, who was also a member of his country's delegation to the Commission on Human Rights, as well as an independent expert of a subcommission, and was, therefore, frequently in Geneva, should require "necessary visits to Geneva for consultations with the Centre", at the expense of the human rights programme.

Draft decisions 41 and 42

Draft decisions 41 and 42 were adopted.

Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) drew the Council's attention to the fact that Amnesty International had just issued a report showing that Israeli forces had deliberately attacked civilians at the Qana United Nations camp during Operation Grapes of Wrath. The report went on to highlight two incidents in which civilians had been killed in flagrant violation of the rules of war. In the first, an Israeli helicopter had attacked an ambulance, killing six civilians, including four children. In the second, nine civilians, including seven children, had died when an Israeli plane destroyed their home. The report found no evidence to back up Israel's claims that Hizballah terrorists had been in either location. It called on the Israeli authorities to launch an immediate investigation so that those responsible could be punished and instructions issued to prevent such incidents from occurring again.

Mr. REZVANI (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation was encouraged by the positive comments made by the representative of Ireland, speaking on behalf of

the European Union, concerning the willingness of the Republic of Iran to cooperate with the United Nations representatives on human rights matters. As the experience of migrant workers in European Union States could confirm no country had a perfect human rights record. The Islamic Republic of Iran deplored attempts to politicize the issue and called for more objective dialogue and an attitude of sincerity towards the human rights debate.

(e) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

Draft resolution E/1996/L.36

Ms. SOLARES (Observer for Guatemala) introduced draft resolution E/1996/L.36 entitled "International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women" on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean group of countries, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria and Turkey.

Draft resolution E/1996/L.36 was adopted.

Draft resolution E/1996/L.37

Mrs. BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Observer for the Bahamas), introducing draft resolution E/1996/L.37 entitled "System-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women to cover the period 1996-2001" on behalf of its sponsors, said that the text was the product of extensive consultations and she hoped that it could be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution E/1996/L.37 was adopted.

(g) CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to resume consideration of draft resolutions IV, V and VI contained in chapter I of the report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (E/1996/30 and Corr.1).

Draft resolutions IV to VI

Mrs. BRYANT (United Nations Office at Vienna), referring to draft resolution V, pointed out that the words "taking into account the growing dangers of links between organized transnational crime and terrorist crimes" should be deleted from paragraph 4 (b) and inserted at the end of paragraph 4 (a) of the draft resolution. The words "including a code of conduct or other instrument" should be deleted from paragraphs 8 and 9, and the word "open-ended" should be inserted before the word "in-sessional" in paragraph 10.

Mr. SHAPIRO (United States of America) requested that implementation of the draft resolutions should be deferred and that the new activities mandated

under the resolutions should be incorporated into the budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon), supported by Ms. KABA (Côte d'Ivoire), said that the Council should adopt the draft resolution and refer it to the Fifth Committee.

Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) likewise endorsed the proposal and took the opportunity to request that the Secretariat send the States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child a letter requesting their comments on the amendment to that Convention which her delegation had proposed and which had been accepted by the General Assembly in 1995.

Mr. SHAPIRO (United States of America) said that although his delegation had strongly supported the substance of the draft resolutions at the recent meeting of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, it had also expressed reservations over their budgetary implications and had called for voluntary contributions to help meet their resource requirements. Since its proposal that implementation should be deferred had not been accepted, the United States would have to disassociate itself from the consensus adoption of the resolutions for it was committed to ensuring that the 1996-1997 regular budget was not increased beyond the $2.608 billion approved for the biennium.

Mr. FELTON (United Kingdom) said that while his delegation supported the substance of draft resolutions IV, V and VI, it had reservations concerning their financial implications. It would expect to see the costs met from within the amount approved for the 1996-1997 biennium. As noted in paragraph 8 of the statement on programme budget implications, should the resources needed not be provided, the activities entailed would have to be postponed, or would be implementable only through a commensurate reduction in other mandates.

Draft resolutions IV to VI were adopted.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.